

**BENJAMIN G. SEAMAN, BFA, LCSW**

352 7th Avenue, Suite 1005  
New York NY 10001  
212-465-3126  
ben@benjaminseaman.com

Appropriations Committee  
Senator Catherine Osten,  
Senator Paul Formica, and  
Representative Toni Walker.

To whom it may concern:

I am writing to share my experience of attending the Educational Center for the Arts in the early 1980s.

When I was in high school at Wilbur Cross in New Haven, Conn., I knew I had developed an interest in the visual arts and had several adult figures in my life who modeled art as a viable career. Very little existed at Wilbur Cross that showed me art was a possible path. When I heard about the Educational Center for the Arts, I applied immediately. Upon beginning the program, a whole new world opened up for me. To spend half the school day in what would be my chosen field, felt like I was finally in my element and I looked forward to attending school in a way that I believed saved my life.

During those years I experienced significant family problems and had moved out of my parents' home staying with friends' families and in my last two years of high school I supported myself with nothing more than the dedicated and concerned faculty at ECA to keep me focused. While no school can be expected to make up for family difficulties, the cohesiveness of the program let ECA be what it could be, a shining light in my darkness, support for the part of my life I did have control over - my career.

Thanks to the resources at ECA, my work developed to a point where I received a nearly full scholarship to attend the School of Art Institute of Chicago, where I continued to flourish. While in school I continued my work as a visual artist and writer. I published both journalism and fiction, and exhibited in a number of shows, and developed a craft of graphic design, which led to full-time employment when I graduated and moved to Latin America, and by 26 I had secured a job as an art director at the Wall Street Journal.

None of this was even imaginable when I was in high school but the resources at the ECA, the space, time, and skilled teachers created the sense of possibility that lives on in me to this day. There is no question that without the resource I could have easily become a casualty of an educational system that was geared toward more mainstream education.

Currently I practice psychotherapy with New York City creatives and I continue my practice as a graphic designer for select non-profits and I continue to paint and exhibit in the New York area.

Please continue funding for the Educational Center for the Arts and trust that their programs are contributing to a better society for everyone.

Benjamin Seaman, BFA, LCSW